

Erin's Rules of Thumb for Successful Deployment Reunions for the Partner at home

Rule #1: Beware the fairytale!

As much as you want life to be perfect when he/she comes back—the house to function, the kids to behave, the in-laws to get along—it never happens. Don't set yourself up for disappointment.

Rule #2: Make realistic expectations and be patient.

Instead of expecting the fairytale, *plan* for a good reunion. They don't just happen. Plan for activities, conversations, and social gatherings that both parties can agree on. Give yourselves *time* to adjust to being back together. You both have changed. Don't expect that he/she will know what you want him/her to say or do when he/she gets off the bus if you don't him/her first!

Rule #3: Avoid “pissing contests!”

Both parties had it bad. No one wins when partners fight over who did more work and who suffered the most. It only takes one person to stop this contest.

Rule #4: Use good timing!

A basic rule of communication is: if you want someone to hear what you are saying, say it when they are listening. A man or woman who has just finished a 36 hour trip home from a combat zone is not listening. Wait.

Rule #5: Avoid the “stupid questions:”

- a. *How was it?*—too general
- b. *Did you kill anyone?*—no right answer and brings back bad memories
- c. *Are you glad to be home?*—you may not hear the answer you want
- d. Any variation of: *Was it hot?, Did you see any camels?, Did you talk to any Iraqis/Afghanis?*—of course, but is this relevant?

A good place to start is: “*I’m really glad you’re home. I’d love to hear whatever you want to tell me about the deployment.*” (Only say this if it’s true!)

Rule #6: Thank each other!

Don't forget who kept the house standing while the other was fighting for the freedom to have it.